

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for assisting a customer in choosing a combination of commodities, wherein the commodities are organized into N categories, wherein ~~said a~~ combination is composed of one commodity selected from each category, and each commodity category has at least two commodity options, and wherein N is an integer greater than one, the method comprising:

(a) ranking, using a computer, the options within each commodity category based, in part, on at least one optimization parameter;

(b) creating, with the computer, at least N combinations of commodity options
by:

for each commodity category K of the N commodity categories, creating a corresponding combination K by:

(i) selecting a highest ranked option for ~~that~~ the Kth commodity category;

(ii) automatically selecting any options in other commodity categories that are linked to the option selected in step(b)(i), wherein the other commodity categories includes any commodity category except the Kth commodity category;

(iii) selecting a valid option ~~options~~ for each of the remaining commodity categories, until the combination of commodity options is complete, wherein a remaining commodity category is any commodity category that has not had an option selected in steps (b)(i) or (b)(ii) for the Kth combination, wherein K is an integer running from 1 to N;

(c) calculating a total effective cost of each combination of commodity options;
and

(d) presenting the at least N combinations of commodity options to the customer, whereby the customer selects a combination of commodity options for purchase.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of: visiting a web site by the customer; and
sending the preferences of the customer to the web site.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein step (b) comprises the additional steps of:

(iv) selecting a next ranked option for a commodity category;

(v) selecting any options in other commodity categories that are linked to the option selected in step (b)(iv); and

(vi) selecting valid options for remaining commodity categories until the combination of commodity options is complete.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein steps (b)(iv), (b)(v) and (b)(vi) are repeated for a plurality of ranks.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein step (d) comprises presenting the combinations of commodity options ranked by total effective cost.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises ranking the options within each category by effective cost.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises calculating an effective cost for each option and ranking the options within each category by effective cost.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the effective cost calculations include bundling discounts.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, wherein step (c) comprises calculating a total effective costs for each of the ~~plurality of~~ combinations of commodity options by adding the effective costs of the selected options in the combinations of commodity options.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein step (a) comprises the steps of, for each category:

- (i) identifying at least one first parameter associated with a commodity option;
- (ii) associating at least one value to the at least one first parameters;
- (iii) calculating an estimated cost of the commodity option based on features of the commodity category that are desired by the customer;
- (iv) obtaining from the customer a preference weighting on at least one second parameter;
- (v) calculating an effective cost of the commodity option by adjusting the estimated cost based on the preference weighting and the at least one value assigned to the parameters; and
- (vi) ranking the options within each category by effective cost.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the parameter is a feature, an attribute, or a performance characteristic associated with the commodity category.

12. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein step (a)(ii) includes the steps of:

- setting a range for the at least one first parameter;
- sampling a random set of customers over the range; and
- determining a best fit utility function using regression analysis on data received as a result of sampling.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the utility function is stored in a first database, information about the commodity including bundling links is stored in a second database, and information about the customer is stored in a third database

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the combinations created in step (b) are saved in the second database.

15. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the utility function is evaluated to obtain the at least one value, wherein the value represents a cost or benefit of the parameter to the customer.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the value is subtracted from the estimated cost if it represents a benefit to the customer or the value is added to the estimated cost if it represents a cost to the customer.

17. (Canceled).

18. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the commodity categories that are included in the combination are predefined.

19. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the commodity categories are services.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the services include telephone service plans.

21. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the commodity are products and services.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein the commodity categories include wireless telephone services plans and handsets.

23 - 24. (Canceled).

25. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein step (d) comprises presenting the combinations of commodity options to the customer, whereby the customer selects a portion of a combination of commodity options for purchase.

26. (Currently Amended) A ~~system~~ computer-readable medium encoded with a plurality of instructions for controlling a computing system to perform an operation for assisting a customer in choosing a combination of commodities, wherein the commodities are organized into N categories, wherein ~~said~~ a combination is composed of one commodity selected from each category, and each commodity category has at least two commodity options, and wherein N is an integer greater than one, the ~~system~~ operation comprising:

(a) ranking the options within each commodity category based, in part, on at least one optimization parameter;

(b) ~~means for~~ creating at least N combinations of commodity options by:

for each commodity category K of the N commodity categories, creating a corresponding combination K by, comprising:

(i) ~~means for~~ selecting a highest ranked option for ~~a particular~~ the Kth commodity category;

(ii) ~~means for~~ automatically selecting any options in other commodity categories that are linked to the ~~selected highest ranked option~~ option selected in step(b)(i), wherein the other commodity categories includes any commodity category except the Kth commodity category;

(iii) ~~means for~~ selecting a valid option options for each of the remaining commodity categories; ~~until the combination of commodity options is complete,~~ wherein a remaining commodity category is any commodity category that has not had an option selected in steps (b)(i) or (b)(ii) for the Kth combination, wherein K is an integer running from 1 to N; and

(d) ~~means for~~ presenting the at least N combinations of commodity options to the customer, whereby the customer selects a combination of commodity options for purchase.

27. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, ~~additionally comprising wherein the operation further comprises:~~

~~means for visiting~~ receiving a visit to a web site by the customer; and

~~means for~~ sending the preferences of the customer to the web site.

28. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the ~~means for creating a plurality of the at least N~~ commodity combinations additionally comprises:

~~means for~~ selecting a next ranked option for a commodity category;

~~means for~~ selecting any options in other commodity categories that are linked to the option selected by the ~~means for~~ selecting a next ranked option; and

~~means for~~ selecting valid options for remaining commodity categories until the combination of commodity options is complete.

29. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the ~~means for~~ presenting the combinations comprises ~~means for~~ presenting the combinations of commodity options ranked by total effective cost.

30. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the ~~means for~~ ranking the options comprises ~~means for~~ ranking the options within each category by effective cost.

31. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the ~~means for~~ ranking the options comprises ~~means for~~ calculating an effective cost for each option and ranking the options within each category by effective cost.

32. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the effective cost calculations include bundling discounts.

33. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the ~~means for~~ calculating a total effective costs comprises ~~means for~~ calculating a total effective cost for each of the ~~plurality of~~ combinations of commodity options by adding the effective costs of the selected options in the combinations of commodity options.

34. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the ~~means for~~ ranking the options comprises, for each category:

~~means for~~ identifying at least one first parameter associated with a commodity option;

~~means for~~ associating at least one value to the at least one first parameter;

~~means for~~ calculating an estimated cost of the commodity option based on features of the commodity category that are desired by the customer;

~~means for~~ obtaining from the customer a preference weighting on at least one second parameter;

~~means for~~ calculating an effective cost of the commodity option by adjusting the estimated cost based on the preference weighting and the at least one value assigned to the parameters; and

~~means for~~ ranking the options within each category by effective cost.

35. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein the parameter is a feature, an attribute, or a performance characteristic associated with the commodity category.

36. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein the ~~means for~~ associating at least one value includes:

~~means for~~ setting a range for the at least one first parameter;

~~means for~~ sampling a random set of customers over the range; and

~~means for~~ determining a best fit utility function using regression analysis on data received as a result of sampling.

37. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 36, ~~additionally comprising wherein the operation further comprises:~~

~~means for~~ storing the utility function in a first database;

~~means for~~ storing information about the commodity including bundling links in a second database; and

~~means for~~ sorting information about the customer in a third database.

38. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 37, ~~additionally comprising wherein the operation further comprises means for~~ saving the combinations in the second database.

39. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 36, ~~additionally comprising wherein the operation further comprises means for~~ evaluating the utility function to obtain the at least one value, wherein the value represents a cost or benefit of the parameter to the customer.

40. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 39, wherein the value is subtracted from the estimated cost if it represents a benefit to the customer or the value is added to the estimated cost if it represents a cost to the customer.

41. (Canceled).

42. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, ~~additionally comprising wherein the operation further comprises means for~~ predefining the commodity categories that are included in the combination.

43 - 44. (Canceled).

45. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the ~~means for~~ presenting the combinations of commodity options additionally comprises ~~means for providing to~~ the customer means to select a portion of a combination of commodity options for purchase.

46 - 67. (Canceled).

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the optimization parameter comprises a utility function.

69. (Canceled).

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68, wherein the utility function is determined at least in part based on a regression analysis.

71. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68, wherein the utility function represents at least one of a cost or a benefit.

72. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 26, wherein the optimization parameter comprises a utility function.

73. (Canceled).

74. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 72, wherein the utility function is determined at least in part based on a regression analysis.

75. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 72, wherein the utility function represents at least one of a cost or a benefit.

76. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 70, wherein the regression analysis employs at least one constant to determine the utility function.

77. (Currently Amended) The ~~system~~ computer-readable medium of claim 74, wherein the regression analysis employs at least one constant to determine the utility function.